

## Mary Lou Terrien

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**From:** Elaine Robinson <ehrobinson@chg-inc.com>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, February 24, 2016 9:21 AM  
**To:** Mary Lou Terrien; Earl Poleski; MikeShirkey@senate.mi.gov; Rep. Lee Chatfield (District 107); Rep. Chris Afendoulis (District 73)  
**Cc:** Nancy Finegood  
**Subject:** HB5232/SB720 - Local Government Committee

I am against HB 5232/SB720, and would like to encourage this committee to stop this bill in its tracks, here in committee.

Historic preservation is a cause that benefits everyone in Michigan, but the language in this bill benefits only a few people.

The study committee has a limit of number of people who can serve on it, and several are required to represent specific entities without regard for their interest or ability to do the work involved. And believe me – the work that goes into establishing a local historic district is intense. Research, understanding eligibility requirements, determining contributing and non-contributing resources, photo documentation, preparation of the report –including preparing building descriptions and developing relevant areas of importance, and preparing significance statements. Plus, the study committee holds a lot of meetings – formal public meetings, smaller conversations with property current (and past if possible), more public meetings, discussions of appropriate boundaries, and yes, more public meetings. The suggested legislation seems to believe that historic districts are formed in a vacuum – with property owners unaware that a district is in the development process. This is certainly not the case.

In addition to the issues with the study committee, the substitution bill:

- The need to have 2/3 property owner petition to even begin the designation process - a standard that isn't followed in zoning laws, or health and safety laws, etc., so why here?
- 2/3 property owner petition requirement is too early in the process to mean much, there is a lot of work that has to happen before there is even responsible citizens formally can enter the process. So, if the 2/3 rule stands, are people breaking the law by doing their "homework" to determine if there is sufficient integrity and historicity to move forward?
- The elimination of the need to follow the Secretary's Standards is counterproductive. These standards provide a level playing field if you will, that means decisions reached by the Historic District Commission once the district is in place do not become arbitrary and capricious. Why reinvent the wheel when the one we have is a standard agreed upon nationwide.
- The insistence that the problems or appeals of decisions be made at a local level. So, I ask this, if the applicant is the local unit of government where then is the chance for arbitration? I speak from experience since currently the Jackson ordinance has this very requirement – and we are working to fix the problem!
- The question of emergency moratoria is still unresolved. That was written into PA 169 with the sweeping 1992 amendments, and we were thankful.

- The 2/3 vote by the local unit to establish a new historic district, modify an existing one, or eliminate one is absolutely new. It does get rid of the local unit of government being able to eliminate a historic district on a whim, and that's good, but why this?
- Finally, I ask why the supermajority of 2/3 has to be met in any of this legislation. In everything else, majority a. Each and every one of you on this committee won your seat by a simple majority of 51 percent. But you are holding historic districts to a standard that the election of the president doesn't even need to meet! Are you that threatened by old buildings?



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